

Epistle of Love

TO

*Friends in the Womens Meetings in London, &c.
To be read among them in the fear of God.*

Dear Friends and Sisters in Christ Jesus to you is the salutation of my true and sincere Love, in the ever blessed pure and precious truth of our God: and to you is my Heart open, in the tender love of our heavenly Father, who hath reached unto us, and lifted up the light of his countenance upon us, and caused the ever blessed light, of his everlasting day to shine among us; and hath made known the riches of his grace unto us, in order to fit and prepare us for his own work and service: To you my wellbeloved in the Lord, doth my Love and Life reach at this time; to you that are given up to serve the Lord his Truth and People; with clearfullnes of Heart and readiness of mind, according to the measure of his grace committed unto you; and the breathings of my Soul unto the God of my Life is, that he may enrich you all with his heavenly Gifts, and Graces, that you may be strong in the power of his might, and made able to perform the work and service of the Lord, in the Church of Christ in this your day, and serve up your Generation in faithfulness unto the end: Oh! my tender Friends, and wellbeloved Sisters in the Lord, having a sence of your great Loss, in parting with one so dearly beloved of the Lord, and wellesteemed among his people *Anno Whitehead*, who was a worthy Instrument, and faithful Labourer in the Church of Christ, one

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whom the Lord had furnished with his heavenly Wisdom, and so filled with divine vertues, that she was able and ready to be helpful in all concerns in the Church of *Christ*, both Spiritual and Temporal ; this I was sensible of by that acquaintance I had with her : She was indeed one of the Lords worthies ; who hath taken her unto himself ; and he was right worthy of her ; who had made her worthy of so blessed a work, and honourable a service in the Church of *Christ* : who blessed her labour and made it effectual for good (as is well known to you that have been Eye witnesses, and conversant with her) as by the many living testimonys from the faithful Brethren and Sisters is demonstrated, and I had true unity with you in it, and I was refreshed, and my heart was truely tendered, and broken before the Lord ; and I was affected with your care and diligence to leave it upon Record, that her worthiness may not be forgotten, nor her faithfulness be Buried in the Grave of Oblivion ; I say my heart was affected in the reading thereof, and the desire of my Soul is, that we that are left behind, may walk in the same Path, and that her past publick testimony that she bore among you, may not be forgotten by you, but that it may be had in remembrance ; for it was seasonable, and needful, *viz.* Against Pride and Vanity and superfluity in many of the younger sort that profess the Holy Truth : which is a grief to the righteous to see how it abounds among such in the City of *London*, and some other places : My spirit have been long grieved, and my Soul bowed down under the weight of it : but considering how many worthy Instruments attended your Meetings, and not doubting but the Lord hath put it into their hearts to testifie against it, I was willing to be silent, and bear the burthen and mourn in secret to see how Pride and Vanity notwithstanding hath taken place in many that profess the truth ; so the true desire of my Soul is, that those concerned may lay it to heart, and be bowed down, and cast of that which causeth the weights, and brings the heavy burthens upon the honest hearted, and grieves the Holy spirit of the Lord, which is the Sin that so easily besets, to wit Pride, and is so delightful to the young people, that the Enemy hath captivated many and taken many in that Snare to the dishonour of God and his precious truth which they profess ; and that to the hurt of their own Souls ; therefore in bowels of tender Love, I exhort you all whom it may concern, to whom this may come

come in the City of London, &c. To incline your hearts to seek the Glory of God and the peace and welfare of your own Souls; and the advancement of the Holy truth that you profess, and are convinced of, which the God of all our mercies hath made known unto you: let your adorning be that comely ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, like Holy women professing godliness: with good works: Oh! that I might prevail with you to follow the council of the Lord, and his servants, and mind the light of Christ in your own hearts and Consciences, to be guided by it into plainness and humility of mind, that you might not be evil examples to others round about you; for the Eyes of many in the Nation are upon you, and those that are inclined to take liberty in Pride and vanity, and superfluity, take strength by you; and when such have been cautioned and admonished to plainness as becomes the truth, they turn it upon us, and say, This is little to what Friends wear in London: (which is too true on some) therefore I intreat you to deny your selves, and take up the Cross and follow Christ Jesus, in the streight and narrow way that leads to Life and peace: And you that are Elders in the Church and Mothers in Israel, I intreat you watch over the younger for good, and be good patterns and Holy examples to them, and use all diligence to admonish, and counsel, with much tenderness in the wisdom and power of God, and judge down Pride and vanity, especially in your own Families, and give no liberty to your Children to please them in any thing that is contrary to truth: when they shall say to you such a one have a Chain of Gold, why may not I? or any other needless thing that may give occasion to the enemies of truth, to point at it, and say the Quakers are as ready to run into any new fashion as we, and so cause the weak to stumble, and turn the simple out of the way: therefore my dear Friends and Sisters, you that have a concern upon you for the Church, and are Elders in the Family of God, stand up in the power and Holy authority of God, to find the Babilonish garment, and the wedge of Gold, that hinders Israels prosperity, and put it out of the Camp; away with the naked Necks and Backs, the needless pinches and Ruffles, the high dresses upon the Head, and tiring the Hair wanton Eyes walking and mincing as they go, and all superfluity that dishonours God and

his truth; least instead of a Girdle he send a Rent; and instead of well-set Hair Baldness, and instead of a Stomacher a girding of Sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty, except you repent: therefore, I intreat you, receive it in Love, as a warning to you, laying aside all superfluity, and receive with meekness the ingrafted Word which is able to save you out of all those things (which grieves the good Spirit of the Lord:) and build you up in that most holy Faith which purifies the Heart, and gives Victory over the World. These things have been a grief unto me, and lay as a weight upon me for a long time: and when I heard the testimony of our dear Sister, which may be taken as the Dying words of so worthy an Instrument; it, I say, was more to be observed, and minded by those concerned. And it arose in my Heart, in the openings of Life, now it is a seasonable time for me to ease my Spirit, and clear my self, to back or revive, this the last publick testimony of our dear Sister, that it may not be forgotten by any that are concerned: so my dear Friends, I have this to say to you that love the Lord above all, and are given up in his service, in the works of Piety and Charity; you are the Chosen Vessels of the Lord, who will be with you, notwithstanding he hath removed and taken away such a faithful Labourer, and fellow helper from among you, yet the Lord is with you my tender Friends, yea, I say, *Israels* God is among you, and he will give you wisdom and strength, as you wait upon him; therefore be encouraged in the blessed work of the Lord, unto which you are called, and be bold and valiant for the truth, to withstand all the false pretenders to love and unity, and are in a dividing Spirit, and secretly endeavouring, to disturb the Churches peace. And stand up in the strength of the Lord, and in the power of his might against all such which would destroy your comly Order (into which the Lord hath gathered you) and bring all into Confusion as they are: and as your Hearts are inclined to this good work, the Lord who is rich in mercy and goodness, he will fill your Qivers with pollished Arrows, and cause your Bow to abide in strength, and so furnish you with his heavenly vertues to inable you for his work and service, that he calls you to; that hard things will be made easie unto you; Ye beloved of the Lord, Gods power will surround you, and his Salvation will be as Walls and Bulwarks about you, and his pure Powerful presence will uphold you,

you, and preserve you unto the end, *Amen*. So to the grace of God, I recommend you, that is able to keep both you and me, and all his Flock and Family every where, in the unity of the Spirit, which is the bond of true peace, and in the Holy fellowship of the Gospel of peace: where there is no seperation, for we have large experience of his goodness and mercies and favours; for our God hath done great things for us even beyond utterance; what Tongue is able to declare, his notable Acts, and his wonderful doings among his faithful people? Oh! who can but praise him, and magnifie his glorious name and return thanksgiving with *Hallelujah* over all, for he is worthy faith my Soul, who am your Friend and Sister in the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and have thus far cleared my Conscience and eased my Spirit.

Theophila Townsend.

*Bear with my plainness and homely expression
Charity make way for it, for the truths sake.*